

Modern Universities and Liberal Democracy

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Abstract - Education and Political System are the two strongest factors on any civilized Society. Modern university is a product/reflection of liberalization of the society. The present paper tries to understand the close ties between Education and Political System.

Keywords: Liberalization, Education, Modern University.

I. EDUCATION AND POLITICAL SYSTEM

Close connection between the **political structure of society** and its **education system**. **Modern university** is a product of the **liberal democratic system of politics** that emerged after revolutionary changes in western countries such as France, Britain, Germany and other European countries. Remarkable feature of educational system in a liberal democracy is relatively **complete freedom** from religious institutions and orthodox, absolutist organizations.

Ancient and Modern universities

Liberal democratic values prevailed in western societies specially in the aftermath of the American war of independence. Modern universities in America and elsewhere in Europe did not focus so much on **theology** and **classics** as on training youth in liberal democratic values and preparing them to take up the responsibilities in the affairs of the state. The **vision of liberalism** varied from country to country but its essential features were common to all.

Liberalism : A different perspective

American education vision is **significantly different** from that of England and Germany. American universities focus was/is more **secular** and characterized by **private/corporate** participation. In Germany idea of liberalism was too **idealistic** while in England idea of liberalism was too **individualistic**. By 19th Century the ideal of **academic freedom** became an integral feature of universities in many countries.

State and Private universities

There were a few state universities but the number of private colleges and universities were not **negligible**. Liberal Democratic societies are **pluralistic societies**. Modern Universities specially in America enjoy considerable **freedom in framing** the **curricula** even though there have been numerous challenges from ideological groups to make it more democratic.

Changing relationship between liberalism and universities

Major changes in this relationship came after the first world war and the reason was the war itself along with the Marxist challenge to the whole idea of Liberalism. England, France and Germany left **universities** and **educational institution** relatively free in their academic and administrative sphere. The achievements of their faculties and alumni in their **respective intellectual fields** have made these countries proud.

Campus politics in USA

Campuses in USA have been **relatively free from politics** even though there have often been protests in defense of civil rights and liberties. American Civil Society has always been **up in arms** against any actual or **potential infringement** of these rights and liberties. After the second world war **campus unrest** became a regular phenomenon. **Such infringements** on grounds of political belief of academics and intellectuals take away a great deal from its loud profession of democracy and liberalism.

II. ROLE OF UNIVERSITY IN LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

The universities are designed ideally to **inculcate the values of liberalism** on the grounds of rational judgment. Their aim is to teach the young generation how to **manage the affairs** of the society for maximizing the potential for **peace, harmony and happiness** for the largest number of people. The combination of **rational thinking** and **empirical knowledge** is the corner stone of a sound educational system.

University autonomy

Essential attribute of a university is its **complete freedom** and **autonomy** from state interference. In India too right from the days of Gurukul and Takshila and Nalanda universities the **central political authority** always kept a distance from the centres of learning. Universities in the West faced the **stiffest challenge** to their autonomy from religious institutions which opposed the **secularisation** of the education system.

Market economy and university

Liberal societies have always pleaded for **reducing** or even **abolishing** the concept of command economy in which all the economic activities are controlled and directed by the Government. With the **coming of market economy** people are earning more wealth and paying more tax, thus enriching the public exchequer to support the universities. This enhances the ability of the state to spend more on education. Scholars in USA and many European countries **have not taken kindly** to market economy.

Representative bodies in university

Modern universities have their own representative bodies to direct and streamline their **policies** and **programs**. These bodies comprise mainly of **academics** and **scholars** from among the faculty and they take academic and administrative decisions. Some eminent scholars and academics who have played important roles in the university education system are **Thomas Massaryk, Raymond Barre** and our own **Dr. Radhakrishnan**. They have become exemplars of uncommon talent and of playing significant roles in education.

University and public sphere

Universities are parts of the public sphere which is open for debates and discussions, for raising even **inconvenient questions** and **exchanging views** and opinions in a free, frank, and untrammled fashion. Through the dispersion of ideas the universities have contributed to the **intellectual, moral** and **economic** well being of their respective societies.

University : Rational acquisition of knowledge

Modern Universities are premised on the belief that knowledge acquired through reason is the **real knowledge** in which there is no element of doubt. Liberal democratic systems encourage **rationality** in **knowledge acquisition** in a completely free atmosphere. This system has persistently been **hostile** to **tradition** and **obscurantism** and have advanced liberal, secular intellectual culture in which the spirit of inquiry is encouraged. This culture across the world has an **uneasy relationship** with esoteric faith-based knowledge.

Universities : Strengthening the liberal democratic Societies

Universities equip people to fight against every kind of **orthodoxy** and **inculcate** the spirit of inquiry. Often give advice to the government on **sensitive, technological** and **scientific** issues. Prepare a workforce that can take **diplomatic** assignments. Act as centres for generating **new** and **innovative** ideas. Places where the best minds **work cohesively** and forge bonds between different branches of **knowledge** and **disciplines**. Committed to building up an **egalitarian** society.

Conclusion

Liberal democracy works for the **common good** and universities as bearers of civility work as nodal centers for achieving this vision. Universities encourage **scientific thinking** and **rationale decision making** in liberal democracies. University academics and scholars provide significant data in various fields which helps democratic governments to **reappraise their plans** and projects for public welfare. In advancing and validating knowledge, the modern universities have become new churches which encourage a **secular theology**. A liberal democratic society remains vibrant precisely because it is always faced with a situation which is **incompatible** with complete consensus. Universities produce and shape individuals who help liberal democratic societies to keep different sectors and groups in proper balance. As persons devoted to the pursuit of truth for its own sake, academics become examples, disinterested of knowledge which is its own reward. Their roles as advisors and consultants provide the much needed intellectual inputs to liberal democracies in realizing their egalitarian vision.

EDUCATION and POLITICAL SYSTEM

Close Connection between the **Political Structure of Society and Education System. Modern University-** A Product of the **liberal democratic system of Politics** that emerges after the revolutionary changes in America and France Followed by Other European Countries. Remarkable feature- **Complete freedom** from religious institutions and orthodox, absolutist organizations.

III. ANCIENT AND MODERN UNIVERSITIES

The American Universities came into existence during the 19th Century when **Liberal Democratic Values dominated American Society in the aftermath of the American War of Independence**. Modern Universities did not focus so much on Theology and ?. The main focus was training the youth in liberal democratic values and modern nation building considering the material and technology perspective.

LIBERALISM: A Different Perspective

American vision different from that of England and Germany. If German idea of Liberalism was **too idealistic** the English idea was **too individualistic**. But by 19th Century the ideal of academic freedom became an integral feature of Universities of many Countries.

STATE AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

There were a few state universities but the number of private colleges and universities were not negligible. Liberal Democratic societies are pluralistic societies. Modern Universities specially in America enjoy considerable freedom in framing the curricula.

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Major change in the relationship came after the first world war and the reason the war itself along with the Marxist challenge to the whole idea of Liberalism. England, France and Germany left universities and educational institution relatively free in their academic and administrative sphere. The achievement of their faculties and alumni in their respective intellectual fields have made these countries proud.

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Role of University in Liberal Democracy

The Universities are designed ideally to inculcate the values of liberalism on the grounds of rational judgment. Treat the young generation how to manage the affairs of the society for maximizing the potential for peace harmony and happiness for largest number of people. The combination of rationale thinking and empirical knowledge is the corner stone of a sound educational system.

UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY

Essential Attribute- Complete Freedom or anatomy. In India too right from the days of Gurukul and Takshila and Nalanda the central political authority has kept the distance. Universities in the West faced the stiffest challenge to their anatomy from Church.

MARKET ECONOMY AND UNIVERSITY

Always pleaded for reducing or even abolishing the concept of command economy in which all the economic activities are controlled and directed by the Government. Now people are earning more wealth and paying more tax, thus enriching the public exchequer. This enhances the Spend on Education. Scholars of USA and many European Countries have not taken kindly to the Market Economy.

REPRESENTATIVE BODIES IN UNIVERSITIES

Own Representative bodies to direct and streamline their Policies and Programs. These bodies mainly comprise of academics and scholars from among the faculty. Thomas Massaryk, Raymond Barre and our own son Dr. Radhakrishnan are some of the best examples.

UNIVERSITY AND PUBLIC SPHERE

University belong to the public sphere which is open for debates and discussions for raising even inconvenient questions and exchanging views and opinions in a free frank untrammled fashion. Through this dispersion the universities contributed to the intellectual and economic well being of these societies.

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Universities -Strengthening the liberal democratic Societies.

Equip people to fight against every kind of orthodoxy and inculcate the spirit of inquiry. Often give advise to the government on sensitive, technological and scientific issues. Prepare a workforce that can take diplomatic assignments. Act as Centre for generating new ideas. Place where the best minds work cohesively and forge bonds between different branches of Knowledge and disciplines. Commitment to build up an egalitarian society.

IV. CONCLUSION

The objective of liberal democracy is the concept of a welfare state where sectors like education and pedagogy are free to take their independent decision without any influence of the political thought or pressure. Education demands a free flow of thought which can complete the basic accomplishment of education of providing a free and conducive environment to the young minds. The present article was an attempt to understand the processes and evolution of liberal democracy and its impact on Modern University.

V. REFERENCES

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